OPINION

Public meetings can be beneficial when properly organized

Last Thursday a public meeting was held to air the subject of the Carbondale Post Office relocation. When the meeting had ended those in attendance agreed that the meeting was worthwhile.

The meeting had given post office officials and local citizens a chance to explain their points of view. The postmaster heard the concerns of the public and vowed to take steps to honor their interests, and the members of the audience learned that the forthcoming move of the post office makes a lot of sense from the standpoint of running an efficient postal operation.

The Carbondale Historical Society which sponsored the meeting demonstrated that the society has been rejuvenated and that it is interested in Carbondale's future as well as its past. The meeting was non-political in nature and well moderated by Robert Powell and Reverend Claude Pullis.

Some people remarked that it was a good idea to hold the public meeting in a local church (in this case the Baptist Church, where Reverend Pullis is pastor) because it set the mood for a more dignified meeting and it gave non-parishoners a chance to become more familiar with one of the local churches and its pastor.

The idea of holding a public meeting to discuss items of general community interest is certainly not new, but in recent years not many have been held in the Carbondale area. The only regularly scheduled public meetings in Carbondale are the school board and city council meetings. Those who have attended school board meetings object to the meeting format, the fact that voting is done before opening the meeting to public comment. As a result, most people feel that voicing their opinion is pointless and they keep their thoughts to themselves.

Carbondale city council meetings witness many people who come to speak their mind, but in most cases the people who speak are out of order. Council is a legislative body. Most of the people who address council complain about problems which fall under the purview of the administration, not council.

Why is it that a man or woman will stand up and speak his or her piece at a public meeting but will not speak privately with the mayor or city manager? Why won't those same people take the time to write a letter to the editor and sign their name?

Our guess is that people enjoy the support of other citizens in a large audience. They also like the fact that public officials must go on record when they respond to